

Millennium Grove, Chillicothe Ohio
Andrew Johnson Weeping Willow
Park Directory Tag: Presidents Glade 6 (P6)

The pictured tree below is a weeping willow, *Salix babylonica*, a species of willow native to dry areas of northern China. It is a medium to large size deciduous tree, growing 65-80 feet tall, with a short lifespan, between 40-75 years. These trees, with their pendulous (hanging or swinging) branches were spread along ancient trade routes, particularly the silk road. They spread into northern Syria in 1730 and subsequently introduced into England, and have rapidly become naturalized, growing well along rivers and in parks. These plants are all females, readily propagated vegetatively, and capable of hybridizing with various other willows. This type of tree is grown very easily through plant propagation.

The willow tree in Chillicothe's Millennium Grove is from the grave site of Napoleon, after being propagated to Andrew Johnson's estate. Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Corsica on August 15, 1796. An interesting history side note is that Napoleon was not French, Hitler was not German, and Stalin was not Russian. Napoleon is one of the most celebrated and controversial political figures in history. One of the greatest commanders in history, his wars and campaigns are studied at military schools worldwide.

Napoleon rose to prominence during the French Revolution and lead several successful campaigns during the Revolutionary wars. As Napoleon I, he was Emperor of France from 1804-1814, and again in 1815. Napoleon dominated European and global affairs for over a decade while leading France against a series of coalitions in the Napoleonic Wars. He built a large empire that ruled over continental Europe before its final collapse in 1815. Napoleon had an extensive and powerful impact on the modern world, bringing change to the numerous territories he conquered and controlled, especially the Low Countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), Switzerland and large parts of modern Italy and Germany. He implemented many fundamental modern policies in France and throughout Western Europe. His lasting legal achievement the Napoleonic Code has been highly influential. Meritocracy, equality before the law, property rights, religious tolerance, and modern secular education, were championed, consolidated, codified and geographically extended by Napoleon.

Napoleon launched an invasion of Russia in the summer of 1812. Much like Hitler would do 130 years later, he greatly underestimated the difficulties the country would bring, along with the great Russian Generals of "frost" and "mud". The campaign resulted in the catastrophic defeat and retreat of Napoleon's Grand Army. A large coalition army defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813. The coalition then invaded France and captured Paris, forcing Napoleon to abdicate in April 1814.

Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba, near Rome. However, he escaped and took control of France in 1815. Napoleon was ultimately defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. The British exiled him to the remote island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic.

In February 1821 Napoleon's health began to deteriorate, he reconciled with the Catholic Church. He died May 5th, 1821, at age 51. His final words were, "France, the army, head of the army, Josephine". In his will, he had asked to be buried on the banks of the Seine, but the British governor said he should be buried on Saint Helena. Napoleon did not want to be buried on Saint Helena, but anticipating as much, requested to be buried in the shade of the willows. He was buried with full military honors in the Valley of the Willows, which became known as the Valley of the Tomb. The French general wanted just NAPOLEON engraved on the tomb, the British governor insisted Bonaparte be added. As a result of the impasse, the tomb slab was left blank.

In 1841, Louis Philippe I obtained permission from the British government to return Napoleon's remains to France. On December 15th, 1840, a state funeral was held. The horse-drawn hearse proceeded

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from the Arc de Triomphe down the Champs-Élysées to the cupola in St Jerome's Chapel, where it remained until the tomb designed by Louis Visconti was completed. In 1861, Napoleon's remains were entombed in a porphyry stone sarcophagus in the crypt under the dome at Les Invalides.

Andrew Johnson was the 17th president of the United States serving from 1865-1869. He assumed the presidency at the time of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In Lincoln's 1864 presidential campaign he dropped Vice President Hannibal Hamlin from the ticket, and after much debate and consideration chose Andrew Johnson as his running mate.

Johnson was sworn in as vice president on March 4th, 1865. He would meet with President Lincoln for the first time since the inauguration on the afternoon of April 14, 1865, just hours before President Lincoln was shot and mortally wounded by John Wilkes Booth. April 15th, 1865, just 42 days after being sworn in as vice president, Johnson would be sworn in by Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, as President of the United States, following the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln's assassination was part of a conspiracy in which Lincoln, Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward were to be killed on the same night. Seward barely survived his wounds, while Johnson escaped attack as his would-be assassin, George Atzerodt, got drunk instead of killing Johnson. Many people believe Atzerodt just got "cold feet". Atzerodt was executed by hanging, along with three other conspirators, including Mary Surratt, the first woman executed, and the only woman hanged by the U.S. federal government.

With all the complexities and divisiveness of Reconstruction President Johnson was in a difficult position. On March 17th, he vetoed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Within three weeks congress had overridden his veto, the first time that had been done on a major bill in American history. For many, this was considered his defining blunder, setting a tone of perpetual confrontation with Congress that prevailed the rest of his presidency. Congress continued to override his vetoes, including the Freedmen's Bureau Act, statehood for Nebraska and the First Reconstruction Act.

In November of 1867, the Judiciary Committee of Congress passed a resolution of impeachment against Johnson. After much debate, the resolution was defeated by the House of Representatives on December 7, 1867, by a vote of 57 in favor to 108 opposed. The issues and tension between Johnson and Congress continued and on February 24, 1868, the House impeached President Johnson for intentionally violating the Tenure of office Act, by a vote of 128 to 47. After a nearly three-month trial, 35 senators voted President Johnson guilty and 19 voted not guilty, thus falling short by a single vote of the two-thirds majority required for conviction under the constitution.

Johnson sought nomination by the 1868 Democratic National Convention but did not receive it, former New York Governor Horatio Seymour was nominated. Seeking vindication for himself and revenge against his enemies he launched a series of senate bids in his home state of Tennessee. In 1875, on his third attempt he won a Tennessee senate seat by one vote. Johnson remains the only former president to serve in the Senate.

Five months into his senate term, in July of 1875 Johnson suffered a series of strokes. Johnson died in the morning of July 31, 1875, at age 66. At the time, he was the only surviving past president. His funeral was August 3, in Greenville Tennessee. He was buried wrapped in an American flag with a copy of the U. S. constitution under his head, according to his wishes.

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